

June 13, 1996

FACT SHEET

PROPOSED AIR EMISSION STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR MEDICAL WASTE INCINERATORS: NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

TODAY'S ACTION...

- ◆ The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is today announcing the availability of additional information that it will consider in developing the final air emission standards and guidelines for new and existing medical waste incinerators. The notice also requests public comment on changes that EPA is considering to the 1995 proposed regulation for this source category.

BACKGROUND

- ◆ Under the Clean Air Act (section 129), EPA is required to regulate emissions of 9 air pollutants from solid waste incineration units that combust hospital, medical, and infectious waste. These pollutants are carbon monoxide, particulate matter, cadmium, lead, mercury, dioxin, sulfur dioxide, hydrogen chloride, and nitrogen dioxide. Some of these pollutants are air toxics, which are those pollutants that are known or suspected of causing cancer or other serious health effects, such as birth or developmental effects. The Clean Air Act requires EPA to develop technology-based standards and guidelines that are based on stringent air pollution controls known as maximum achievable control technology (MACT).
- ◆ On February 27, 1995, EPA proposed standards and guidelines to reduce air pollution emissions from medical waste incinerators.
- ◆ Various industry groups were still collecting air emissions data and other information on this source category at the time the public comment period for the proposed rule closed in April 1995. Therefore, EPA stated in the preamble of the proposed rule that it would accept and consider this additional information in developing the final rule. EPA is now requesting public comment on the new data, as well as possible changes to the proposed rule based on the new data.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN COMPONENTS OF EPA'S SUPPLEMENTAL NOTICE?

EPA is considering the following changes to the proposed air

emission standards and guidelines for medical waste incinerators:

- ◆ In the proposal, subcategories of medical waste incinerators were based on the type of incinerator (e.g., continuous, intermittent, and batch), which roughly correlates with incinerator size. EPA is now considering subcategories based directly on size (e.g., small, medium, and large). As in the proposal, regulatory requirements will be considered separately by subcategory. Size could be determined based on design capacity or Federally enforceable permit limits. The capacity of multiple units in one location would be combined to determine size.
- ◆ In the proposal, EPA defined "medical waste" very broadly to include virtually all waste from healthcare facilities. EPA is now considering narrowing the definition to reflect "potentially infectious" waste only by adopting the New York State Department of Health definition of medical waste. Medical waste is defined in this rulemaking only to determine which incinerators would be subject to the final regulations.
- ◆ EPA's proposed rule required continuous emission monitoring system(s) (CEMS), where available, and required parameter monitoring and routine stack testing where CEMS were not available. EPA is now considering compliance based on parameter monitoring and routine inspection/maintenance rather than CEMS.
- ◆ EPA's proposed rule included specific requirements for operator training. EPA is now considering changes to these requirements in order to give States more flexibility in determining what constitutes an acceptable operator training program.
- ◆ In the proposal, EPA considered waste disposal units utilizing plasma or gasification/oxidation technology (i.e., pyrolysis) to be covered by the medical waste incinerator regulation. EPA is now considering separate regulatory requirements for medical waste "pyrolysis" units.
- ◆ Finally, because new information was submitted regarding the inventory of medical waste incinerators and the performance of air pollution control technology, EPA has developed a new set of regulatory options for consideration in the final rule. The supplemental notice includes estimates of the air, water, solid waste, energy, cost, and economic impacts of these regulatory options. Some of the regulatory options are more stringent than those outlined in the proposal,

while some are less stringent.

- ◆ EPA will accept public comments on the supplemental notice until August 8, 1996.

Notice of Public Meeting

- ◆ A public meeting will be held on July 10, 1996 starting at 9:00 a.m. at the Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites, 625 First Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314. The telephone number for the hotel is (703) 548-6300.
- ◆ The purpose of the meeting is for EPA to review the contents of the supplemental notice and answer questions so that commenters can better prepare their written comments.

WHAT IS EPA'S SCHEDULE FOR ISSUING THE FINAL RULE?

- ◆ EPA is under a court order to issue the final air regulations for medical waste incinerators by July 25, 1997.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

- ◆ Anyone with a computer and a modem can download the notice from the EPA's electronic Technology Transfer Network (TTN) by calling (919) 541-5742. Look under menu "Clean Air Act Amendments" (CAAA). For further information about how to access the board, call (919) 541-5384.
- ◆ For further information about the notice, contact Rick Copland at (919) 541-5265 or Fred Porter at (919) 541-5251 of EPA's Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards.